



PLAN: Downtown Advisory Group Meeting #2

Wednesday, April 24th, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Boston City Hall, BPDA Board Room

Advisory Group Attendees:

- Rob Adams, Boston Society of Landscape Architects
- Barbara Boylan, The Druker Company
- Paul Chan, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of New England
- George Coorsen, Downtown Boston Residents' Association (DBRA)
- Alison Frazee, Boston Preservation Alliance
- Arturo Gossage, Chinatown Residents Association
- Gilbert Ho, Chinatown Main Streets
- Peggy Ings, Emerson College
- Chuck Labins, Tufts Medical Center
- Karen LaFrazia, St. Francis House
- Susanne Lavoie, Wharf District Council & Greenway Conservancy Board
- Joshua Leffler, Beacon Hill Civic Association
- Angie Liou, Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Lydia Lowe, Chinatown Community Land Trust
- Beatrice Nessen, Friends of the Public Garden
- Mary Ann Ponti, Saint Anthony Shrine
- Seth Riseman, Boston Society of Architects
- Joyce Sanchez, Boston University
- Rosemarie Sansone, Downtown Boston Business Improvement District
- Rishi Shukla, DBRA
- Ann Teixeira, SpeakEasy Boston & New England Philharmonic
- Theresa Tsoi, Chinatown Business Association
- Tony Ursillo, DBRA
- Jason Wright, Suffolk University

Ex-Officio Attendees:

- Captain Kenneth Fong, BPD
- Roger Mann, MBTA

City of Boston Attendees:

- Joe Christo, BPDA
- Andrew Grace, Mayor's Office of Economic Development
- Jonathan Greeley, BPDA
- Mary Knasas, BPDA
- Marcus Mello, BPDA
- Dwan Packnett, Mayor's Office of Economic Development
- Kennan Rhyne, BPDA

PLAN: Downtown—Advisory Group Meeting #2—Wednesday, April 24th, 6:00 p.m.

DISCLAIMER: The Boston Planning & Development Agency provides these records "as is" and does not make any representation or warranty, express or implied, with respect to the content, quality, relevance, accuracy, completeness or adequacy of any information or materials contained herein. These records have been made available for informational purposes only, and do not constitute statements, endorsements, recommendations, acknowledgements, agreements or decisions by the Boston Planning & Development Agency, the City of Boston, its agencies, or any of their respective officers, employees, attorneys, representatives or agents.

- Corey Zehngebot, BPDA

PLAN: Downtown Consultant Team:

- Kathryn Firth, NBBJ
- Rodrigo Guerra, NBBJ
- Chris Herlich, NBBJ
- Alex Krieger, NBBJ

Public Attendees:

7 members of the public

- Maren Anderson
- Theo Brossman
- Jessica Katzen
- Murriel Kelleher
- Nima Shamtoub
- A. Taylor
- Kim Trask

Advisory Group Members Unable to Attend:

- Erica Blonde, Member of the Downtown Workforce
- Jung Shen Kuo, Josiah Quincy Upper School & Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Herb Lozano, Roxbury Innovation Center
- Peter Paravalos, MBTA

PLAN: Downtown Website: bit.ly/plandowntownboston

Materials and the Presentation from the Advisory Group can be found here:

<http://www.bostonplans.org/news-calendar/calendar/2019/03/07/plan-downtown-advisory-group-meeting>

Meeting Summary:

On Wednesday, April 24th, 2019, the second meeting of the PLAN: Downtown Advisory Group commenced at approximately 6:00 pm, with an introduction by the PLAN: Downtown project manager, Kennan Rhyne, BPDA Senior Planner, at the BPDA Board Room at Boston City Hall.

Kennan reviewed the agenda, provided an overview of the meeting content and the Advisory Group schedule, and summarized previous and upcoming community engagements. She also reviewed the goal and timeline for PLAN: Downtown.

Alex Krieger, NBBJ, delivered the first part of the presentation that focused on the preliminary understanding of “character areas” downtown. Kathryn Firth, NBBJ, presented an analysis of existing characteristics and then opened the room to begin the discussion.

PLAN: Downtown—Advisory Group Meeting #2—Wednesday, April 24th, 6:00 p.m.

DISCLAIMER: The Boston Planning & Development Agency provides these records “as is” and does not make any representation or warranty, express or implied, with respect to the content, quality, relevance, accuracy, completeness or adequacy of any information or materials contained herein. These records have been made available for informational purposes only, and do not constitute statements, endorsements, recommendations, acknowledgements, agreements or decisions by the Boston Planning & Development Agency, the City of Boston, its agencies, or any of their respective officers, employees, attorneys, representatives or agents.

Kennan and Corey invited the Advisory Group followed by members of the public to comment and ask questions.

Advisory Group Questions & Comments

- An AG member commented on the lack of historical assets in Chinatown and the building age map in relationship to Chinatown's row houses. She was interested in Chinatown being recognized as a historical neighborhood with working class immigrant families.
- An AG member asked what is worthy of being preserved and mentioned that there are mixed reasons and a long process for local designation. The City should not limit itself to what is already designated, but think about what it values in its built environment moving forward.
- An AG member commented that there should be more of a focus on their similarities and commonalities as opposed to divisions between the character areas.
- An AG member asked that the analysis also focus on the "who," and suggested looking at the mix of residents, students, workers, tourists, and seasonality. Character is made by people and their patterns. Another AG member voiced agreement.
- An AG member suggested mapping tech startups moving into the area. She also commented that transportation access is an important influence on the "who."
- An AG member stated that Chinatown has a lack of recreational open spaces, but that the maps show it having lots of green space. She requested rating the quality of green spaces, including public/private, maintenance, and physical features.
- An AG member appreciated the nuances of the character areas and commented on the global nature of downtown, permeability of blocks, and landmarks. He spoke about having a respect for Downtown Crossing for visitors who want to experience not just Boston, but America.
- An AG member asked about looking at students as a lens of the "who." Students are a character group in and of themselves and there is a diversity within this group.
- An AG member wanted more of a focus on the who in terms of a quality of life mapping. How is the student experience different from the resident experience? Upper floor vs. ground floor experience? He commented on the highly subjective experiences that are hard to measure and asked for more clarification of what problem the City is trying to solve. An AG member agreed that users define character rather than map boundaries.
- An AG member voiced disagreement with the boundary between the Financial District and Wharf District. Kathryn expressed that the preliminary boundaries were shaped by characteristics of the built environment such as building age, scale, and block organization.
- An AG member asked what is the intended use of the boundaries? Kennan outlined the future need to align the goals of the study, to be developed through the Vision Workshop, with the location-specific goals of specific places downtown. She stated having a series of recommendations that could be unique to the character areas, and others that could apply to study area holistically is a likely outcome to the study.
- An AG member mentioned that the Chinatown MBTA Station was not in the Chinatown character area in the mappings. She also commented on proximities to highways as a health concern. She requested discussing the topic of publicly accessible interior spaces at a future meeting.
- An AG member commented on the terminology of "character areas" versus "subdistricts" and that some of the proposed boundaries are a surprise.
- An AG member asked about calling the character areas "Existing Districts Today." Alex responded that we are not trying to define boundaries today, but are looking into issues that are becoming important to defining boundaries. Kennan added that they are preliminary and were drawn as a prompt for this discussion. An AG member replied that this is where

PLAN: Downtown—Advisory Group Meeting #2—Wednesday, April 24th, 6:00 p.m.

DISCLAIMER: The Boston Planning & Development Agency provides these records "as is" and does not make any representation or warranty, express or implied, with respect to the content, quality, relevance, accuracy, completeness or adequacy of any information or materials contained herein. These records have been made available for informational purposes only, and do not constitute statements, endorsements, recommendations, acknowledgements, agreements or decisions by the Boston Planning & Development Agency, the City of Boston, its agencies, or any of their respective officers, employees, attorneys, representatives or agents.

the problem lies – how do you use “character” to set up boundaries when people have different notions of the character of each area?

- An AG member commented that the boundaries should feel like a heat diagram, or epicenters that start to expand outward. Kathryn agreed that the maps should prompt people to ask if there are trends of dominant characteristics that draw people to different areas.
- An AG member asked that the study be addressed holistically without subdivision. Several AG members were in support of this.
- An AG member mentioned the need to see a breakdown of educational uses and its importance on “the who” dimension of the question.
- An AG member mentioned that the goal of the study should be improve fluidity and that we need to unify without homogenizing the subdistricts.

Public Questions & Comments

- A member of the public commented that retail in Downtown Crossing is an important concept and that she wants to see a retail vision.
- A member of the public commented that the mapping would look different if the Boston Common and the Greenway were visualized on the map and included in the district, and said he would like to see this thought about moving forward.

Kennan delivered closing remarks and thanked everyone. The next Advisory Group meeting will be held on May 22, 2019 at 6:00.

The meeting concluded at 8:00 pm.